CANDOUR

A. E. TOMLINSON

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CANDOUR

H. E. Tomlinson

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FIRST POEMS

By

A. E. TOMLINSON

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THE PEACE

This have I pledged by all the joys that are,
When kings and crowds have had their fill of War,
And dust and darkness hold the hippodrome,
Eftsoons to harness for the hills of home,
Where, screened from the human cad and canaille brood,
A kingly man may pander to his kingly mood.

Truant and unrepentant, up and gone away,
Strongly I'll stride me through the changing day,
Over the interfoldment of the dales,
Over the roof of ridges, and the syke-land trails,
By uncouth barrow, and still pagan croft,
Now in the dimpled streamful ghyll, and now aloft
Where leaden high ridge roads leap to a livid sky,
Sour and solitary, royally will I.

There to behold in August weather
Empurpled jubilance upon the heather,
With sumptuous purples such as close the day
With regal glamour on the Western bay;
Volcanic purples in the mid-day heats,
Funereal purples as the day retreats,
Full-pitched purples for a right full heart,
And I a purple Cæsar, arrogant, apart.

There time is eased with sleek prophetic balm,
And every second pearled with holy pregnant calm,
That, passing, seems to promise paradise;
Dawn, seen there, for heaven would suffice.

But, at the setting, when the reddled ridges
Fling one on one their cresting coral bridges
From scarlet moor to a scarlet sky,
The heath is heaven's own, and a God am I.

And every month of twelve with fresh allure
Tricks up a mort of tinctures on the moor;
Winter is brown as peat and reeky blue,
March cold cinder ashes blown before April's hullaballoo
Of young slopes bracken-green, and rills
All dandied up with gaping daffodils;
But aye the riggs are lone and tempestful,
And aye the dales are hale and comfortful.

But what use from the womb of dawn,
That richly kist of fond cajoleries be born?
What use the carmined setting's burned furore?
But red recallments of the reds of war,
Bliss untrammelled to the trammelled brute;
Four years' sloping arms can only see to shoot.

LAST OF THE LEAVES

Black against the crystal sheen
Of afterglow to the sun at e'en,
Grim against the gold are seen
Those flocks of leaves like refugees,
Like flocks of finches in the trees;
Perched-up leaves, facsimiles
Of perched-up birds, leaves unimpaired
Through all the Equinox, and spared
On dangling trees to droop and freeze
Blackly, bleakly in the breeze;
Opaque and plain, all in one plane
Like swallows painted on a frieze.

Each bird a leaf, each leaf a bird,
Pendulous and gently stirred
By dreams, and throbbing as though scared
By indrawn days and outdrawn nights
Commanding them to Autumn flights.
The sky throws up that arrow sheaf
Of leaves like birds in sharp relief;
Leaves like birds all faced one way,
Fluttering, primed to flit away,
Each trembling leaf a twittering bird
Charged with impulses absurd,
Feverishly inspired by great
Convulsive visions, and irate
Gigantic lusts, as though they shared
Electric thoughts like thoughts transferred
Through space from One whose word,

Forseeing, bids them to migrate
Ere yet the signal flakes gyrate
White as death from skies of slate.

Each bird a leaf, by black frosts burned,
Each leaf a bird, a migrant turned
To seek new fastnesses nor wait
For keener messages from fate.
They saw the signs that no man sees,
Persuaded heard persuasive pleas
Of sanctuaries in Southern Seas.
Next day flown to lairs unknown;
Noiselessly their wings had dared
The dark and into darkness fared;
Their grief untold, their songs unheard,
Migrated, vanished from the scene,
No more seen like flocks at e'en
Against the gold and olive green.

MARCH PAST

The Staff heard music in the marching fife
The dancing drumstick and the blared bassoon,
And when the flare-lit raid ran rife
It made them music to the sickening moon;
And in the purring shells and spattering strife
They heard such lullabies as culvers croon.
And white-faced death for them made harmony,
They thought a howling wound as sweet as honey.

The Sergeant-major thought it dulcet glee
To ring with blasphemy the nonplussed ranks
To bawl obstreperous on each company,
To slang a mumskull at his flatfoot pranks;
He almost packdrilled him to atrophy;
His inflamed glottis never needed thanks,
Mellifluous to him the obsequious 'Sir,'
Let Smith omit it if he damwell dare.

The Quartermaster heard a barcarolle
Loosed from the 'bully' in the bubbling pans,
He loved his rations like his very soul
And always scrounged himself a double man's;
Lush melodies came from the cheese he stole,
The milk played concert in its rusted cans;
His tuneful tunic drummed itself undone,
His apoplectic paunch was like a tun.

And Smith and others of the best platoon
Drank muddier beer though themselves were muddy,
And in estaminets heard a jocund tune
Rippling from lips a trifle over-ruddy;

And Mac said 'Mon, isn't this reet boon'?
And Smith 'Norarf, why man it's bloody.'
Such scherzos heard there they'd dance and laugh,
Belched from some tin-tuppenny flat phonograph.

And you and I sang duet in that score
Arcadians both, though lackeys to the guns,
Faring unlovely through the lanes of war;
For once we heard up by the Menin Door
A cracked accordion of the entrenched Huns,
And held it as eery as the play Coq D'Or.
And once we heard an ousel sing at Loos,
Like some pure girl entrapped in that carouse.

STARS AND GREAT IDEALS

I.

Stars and Great Ideals, lucida that light
The wilderness, the flatness, the discomfited survey
Of visionaries, pilgrims; sheikhs and headsman they,
Agitating, rousing, mustering to the fight;
Their voices carry onwards across the wastes away
Full into the future; our caravans astray
In choked and shrunken courses hear them speak and say
"For Allah and the Favoured." We listen in delight,
And, listening, loose our bridles, forward to the fray.

The stars are leaders, caliphs, descended in their day
From One who kissed the Prophet, twice-born lords of night,
The desert not more noble, more silent in its might;
Their frown may mean the death of slaves; taciturn alway,
Their gesture is a king's decree, their sacred fingers sway
The ranks of True Believers, the reticent array
Of hillsmen on Sahara's verge; with sunrise they recite
Their verse of salutation, then mutely point the way
Across the gulf of furrowed sands, the hillocks white
With shells of vanished oceans, across the hazes right
Through the thickening heat-waves; they motion and incite
The faithful on to freedom; our Arab hearts obey,
Stringing out behind them, Southwards and away
Across the thin Equator, across the line, to sight
The clustered crests like battlements outlined on the grey
Soft horizon greyly; and there, at last, we lay
The dusts of our endeavour; in the defile we alight
Beneath some dim escarpment; in sanctuary, respite
Unharness, climb the summit, with clouds about us stay
Lodged with stars and visions, bivouacked on the height.

II.

Stars stand for Ideals, crumbling not away
Through all Time's transactions; in glistening array
Like pebbles on a swirling shore, on the shore of night
Like pebbles in the surges, they pit their bedded might
'Gainst impact and inclemency; the rolling and the spray
Of ocean leaves them sterner; through the flux of May,
The backwash of October, in the sky they stay,
In the vault of heaven, like chips of chrysolite,
Flints and sprinkled particles on the level grey
Shelved the tidal beaches; stars whose every ray
Stabs and pierces spaces, whose stabbing prongs of light
Are hafted with sheer passion; from sky to earth in flight
They lance the sky, impale the earth, and fix themselves alway
Fast in the flesh of heaven, trammelled there as tight
As lips to bloodless lips aligned, voluptuous in delight.

Stars whose generous beacons share their endowed light
With dreamers and romantics; not meagrely; nay, nay,
They split their quota freely with every maggot, mite
And man on earth adventuring; they're pilot-stars by night,
Selfless and anonymous; and, uncalculating, they
Also serve aloofly the mariners of day.
Wealth to wealth already! from neediness they pay
Alms to summer's plenty, tribute to the might
Imperial of August; each unimposing ray
Drips silver through the July noon, drips surreptitious slight
Sesterces and savings in the shekel-chest of May.

III.

Deathless, single-hearted, mariners of night,
Weatherpitted pilots, the stars above us stay

Like tokens of deliverance, and they alone excite
Conspiracies for freedom; they alone are stedfast, they
Alone extollable, they alone can sway
The temperament and manhood of all nations, and incite
Moods and revolutions, untoward affray,
Fell but ever forward; they face the arduous fight,
They battle through the storm-belt, through tempests which dismay
All our lesser leaders, swooning at the sight
Of threatening gibbets from afar; with comfort they requite
The blood of undertakings, and they alone can slight
The blackest prohibitions and gainsay
Regulations, hame-reins, laws and snaffles tight,
Which meeker, sleeker mariners abjectly obey.

We clutch the task and drain it, we drink the drug and fight
Bemusedly yet bigly; and every aim we lay
Is laid for our Ideals; dutiful, we slay
Our brothers for Ideals, phantom friends that stay
Ankledeep beside us, more solid in their might
Than we who line the trenches; phantoms that incite
The overloaded worker, the sponge, the parasite,
The shy, the bloody-handed alike to join the fray,
To wait alike in lethargy the bullet that shall bite
Its mouthful, and leave sleeping on the duckboards in the bay,
A crime, a corpse, dismantlement, and squandered light.

IV.

The stars in their formation march in mute array,
March through all the tales of time; through the fables of the night
They tread like strong traditions; wherever man may write
His fasti and his archives, the stars above convey
Their dumb approvals, append their name, and lay

Their seal upon the imprint; their every sharpened ray
Is like a pencil-point with which the stars indite
Praises, instigations, and temperately inveigh
In favour of Ideals; one Will, one Word have they,
One clause for all indentures, one covenant to plight,
One God, one adoration, one prayer, one law, one rite.
Their pilgrimage pursuing, one Ark is borne by day
Before them, one charge, one disposition; aloft one brand alight
Against the careless heathen; one tactic for the fray.

From the stars this precept; to know that contrite
Souls and steady service are the holding and the right
Of humankind, of serfs and little Cæsars; be resolute alway
To serve men, not to rule them; be powerful to obey,
In subjection mighty, generous in that might.

To snap the servile grip of Self; with sabre-tooth to bite
Your way to open, brook no verboten, nor yet lay
Duties on your brother, save that of service, yea
The leash and limitation of world-service, and to fight
And work along with fellow-workers for the common end in sight.

HARBOUR LIGHTS

The sea is like a road, its surfacing
Rutless, surfless, trodden down, appearing
Less rugged than plate-glass, or oily hide
Of cachalot; you'd say it typified
The peace that lives two leagues below, defied
Leviathan to break it; you'd say it tried
To ape Pentelic marble; it's streaked and dyed
And littered like the level sands; its selvedging
Trimmed off, its fins and fault-lines rectified,
All skewbacks straight, all venom set aside,
It might be polished steel, glistening,
Smooth as camphor. All its impeding
Waves collapsed, grew stiff and mortified
Ten fathoms out; its shoreward ruffling
Breakers plane off, plash down, subside,
Nestling to its breast, as though resolving
Not to break the magic, nor mar the alluring
Surface where those lamp-reflections ride.

As in the chafing tide those lights cohere
And rive apart grotesquely, you'd declare
Each one an essence and a soul looming
Up from limbo, and lividly subliming
Every moment less ungrossly into air.

You'd call them emanations, souls ascending
Wraith-like from the sea, and delicately melting
Into pallor and the void; from the sea they rear
Right smash into your eyes, contorting
Intermittently; now huge, now spare,

Now spacious, and now formlessly constricting
Like gases under pressures that recur
In fits and bursts; so fluent you'd aver
Each reflex were a chimera, were a thing
Electric, immaterial; so vacillating
Fickle and unrigid you'd infer
Perpetual motion from them, or might dare
To liken them to spirits sorrowing,
Timeless, inarticulate, still hearkening
Wistful and attentive to the prayer
Christ made in Gethsemane; each unflinching
Light stands for Shekinah, is, as it were
God in person manifest, hovering
Over Calvary, and shouldering
The Temptation; effulgence, suave and rare
All the gloom and mystery dispersing
Lighting all the charnel and the darkness there.

Reflexes ethereal, so dazzling,
Yet so ghastly and unstable, they'd compare
With sub-celestial spirits, with anything
That's illusion, phosphorescence and bizarre;
They're marvels and abstractions that deter
The brain from deeper probing, puzzling.

Those harbour-lights are spirits in despair,
Scores of angels vibrant on the wing,
Apparitions, ghouls, embodying
The turmoil of each palpitating year
That adds to human pain; so absorbing
Yet indefinable you'd say their wavering
Rays were Phlogiston itself, were

The stuff and core of planets, whose character
Is ether and is light; the substance and repair
Of earths and spaces, the womb and the begetting
Of order from the hubbub and the blur
Which God smoothed out, and fondled and made fair,
Achieved his universe, and in their setting
Placed lights and lesser lights to breed and bear
In firmament, and their replicas to string
And straggle, spurt and sparkle there
On the tide, and evermore astir.

Crafts of all ladings have cleared at Kew
Flotillas of tintings and tonnage of hue,
Yenisei yellows and velvet piles
And vivid stuffs from the Solomon Isles;
Grainings and stainings judiciously pressed
From the silken East and electric West;
A corner in colours, a mart of tints,
Flamboyance hot as peppermints.
Triremes sailed with mauves of Tyre,
Catamarangs with Bengal Fire,
Florida chows with kermes red,
And caravels with Aztec lead,
Cinchona, cinnamon, quinine,
Realgar and macaw green;
Yawls from Haarlem with hot galore
Got from the bulbs in their March furore.

A thousand tints of seas and skies
Where beech and bluebell mobilise
Their million Turkish infantry;
With great laughs of lapis lazuli;
The moment's blues where martins skim
The blues that keep with seraphim;
The mist's, the slate's, the mountain's blue
All live in bluebells down at Kew.

Rhododendrons are red Hell
Or red rafale askance their dell,
One pant of flame, one curried fire,
One upcrest foam of hot desire,

Cyclonic down on heart and eye
In volleyed, vehement battery;
Like redcoats stemming through red flood
Of red ebullience of blood.
They are so made of moltenness
As tempered steels that coalesce;
Irascible reds and emollient blue
Are the gift of the Gods to the gardens at Kew.

Such an Autumn is this, so queer and bland,
Speeding the pulse, stirring the blood,
So crammed with tidings, ill and good,
If a man essayed to understand
The whole of his dreams in the creepy wood,
He'd sink in his tracks, swoon as he stood,
For lack of the force and the hardihood
Of mind and soul that those dreams demand;
His veins would seize with the plenitude
Of phantasies at his command,
Of thoughts and murmurs flogged and fanned
Through his fuming brain, and he'd be unmanned
Like a man who sleeps for want of food.

Such signs and sorceries in the land,
Such wonderworks half understood,
Such furtiveness on every hand
So sly and false and fraught with blood,
A man alone in the murk of the wood,
Suggestion working on his mood,
Might well kneel down in soil or sand
And blurt out scandals to his God.

A man might hold his breath and stand
So stunned and suppliant that he would
Hear whispered schemes and mysteries planned,
Hear red drops drip from a skeleton hand,
Hear steps go by, the softened thud
Of someone stealing underhand
Behind him in the solitude;

And see swift fiends and spirits banned
Striving there against his good,
And feel his soul and his manlihood
Claimed by them beyond remand.

This Autumn slinking with his wand
Like a brazen serpent in his hand,
This weaver of witchcraft in his hood
And his magic gown of golden mull
With half-moons worked and the Syrian Bull,
This hunchback in the underwood,
Whose sockets burn in his skinless skull,
This Autumn soon a prince shall stand
Shedding down enchantment and
Melting the branch with the spells he's brewed.

From secret places in the wood
He spirits the heart from the whole of the land,
And like a spider seems to brood,
From the coign of his web, a golden band
Of soft mist made and of soft gold mud,
Watching the ways on either hand;
Like a spider, like a tarantula
Uncouthly crouched, this Autumn stood
Bloated, bursting, fat and full,
Squirting gold and plentiful.

And there in the mist on the soft gold mud
Where Autumn the Melter lately stood,
There's a ghostly print
As evidence
On the shingle and brash of the path through the wood,

Half-erased, no more than a hint
Of all his craft and excellence.
And there the rays of the sun compound
To paint that print upon the ground
With gold that tells in double sense
Both of dearth and opulence;
Of dearth advancing to impound
That opulence of scent and sound,
All that honeyed eloquence
Of woodland birds, that succulence
From all the herbs which did surround
Dawdling Summer's indolence.

And there, in the mud, where Autumn stood,
Intrepid of heart in the hungry wood,
He's melted as his malice could
A superfluity of gold
From all the misty neighbourhood,
Transmuting air and earthy mould,
Land and mist and leaf and mud,
The roof and the root of the world to gold.
In sooth his harryings so astound
The season with their violence,
That Winter, tiptoe on the fence,
Stumbles as he takes the bound.

This many a night the shrinking wood
Has been bewitched, has been bedfast,
Its days draw in, its heart can't last
An hour of Winter's indigence;
And since the Melter came to cast,

Superbly as a monarch would,
The badge of his munificence
On the pride of the leaf, the whole proud brood
Of greenbacks wears his gold imprint;
Each lean leaf wears a scar and a dint
A blain and a burn from his glowing splint.

The mist is making his cave in the wood
Ready for his residence,
The Sun, as master of his mint,
Driving through in his diligence,
Ransacks all its summer tint
As deftly as a master could;
He melts and he mints the trees around,
And, stung by Winter's imminence,
He grants each stone, each shining flint,
Grants each mound, each mound tree-crowned,
Grants each leaf-strewn eminence,
An extravagance of gold, a flood,
A riot, an inconsequence
Of incorruptible gold and good,
Gold ungrudged and without stint.

And now the leaves at his demand
Change to coins and tarnished pence,
Covering fees and recompense
For service paid as they disband,
When down they drift to feed the land,
Litter and waste and negligence,
Metallic patches, bits of band,
Golden scraps of impotence.

The Autumn branch may still command
Those old bronzed leaves like tarnished pence,
But the stuff of their veins and each cell and strand
Is dry and crackled, hard and tense;
Each of them knows the incidence
Of Autumn's princely fingerprint,
Their starveling cheeks are all adint
And ridged with gold, and show the glint
And impress of munificence.

Where Autumn wields his wizard's wand
The branch is ablush at his vehemence,
And the leaves he loves are supremely tanned
To that satisfying godsent grand
Sapless but voluptuous tint
Of the box that bears our passions hence,
The tint of time and trickling sand;
Each leaf wears his gold imprint,
A blazon of their former bland
Unshrouded Summer affluence;
Each leaf shares his golden tint,
Their marriage-shroud, a happy-land
Apparel of impermanence.

The leaf he maimed, the flames he fanned,
Leap the branch and now expand
Like songs about the blemished wood;
In the brow of the beech he takes his stand,
His theme is gold, he schemes for blood,
Contriving with the mist and mud
Surpassing alchemy and grand.

In the brow of the beech where it's scorched and browned,
Right in the thick of its one-time dense
Leafywork is his residence;
Whose leaves in fluent shame expound
The sin of his incontinence
Whose raiment, parted by his hand
And all ablaze from his melter's brand,
Is sealed with his magnificence.

Where most he loved, there most he frowned;
The tearful beech and half ungowned,
Most bears the trouble and expense
And stain of royal preference;
The beech is his by precedence,
The panting profligate, the hound
Has sent her loveliness to ground,
And there she bleeds, her diffidence
In Autumn's tainted favours drowned.
Her shaded innocences found
The grimness of his influence
A stain more fatal than pretence,
His hot breath and his prurience
Hysterical and unprofound,
More killing than indifference.

The beech is his own, his golden gull,
So rich in the moult that her gold increase
Has filled his pride and his panniers full;
Her great wings draggle, and droop and crease,
For he squeezes and fondles and treats the trull
Like the rest of the tenantry on his lease,
Manhandles them all in his mad caprice,
The whole of the greenwood, poop and hull,
Stage and stalls and frontispiece.

He rapes their bravery like a bull,
And he mawls and he mars their masterpiece,
And relaxes not, allows no lull,
Till Winter coming as Clerk of the Peace
In chilly accents warns the fool
That brawl and rampage now must cease.
But a sennight ere his lease is null
He's anointed the woods with his golden grease
Till their flanks and their foliage in decease
Are all swept back and wonderful.
And gold flows down from the rump of the wood
Spread to the sun like a Golden Fleece,
Bemottled, branded in with rud,
Where his fellmonger's finger handled the wool,
Where he teased a fawn slipe and a kindly pull
From the brown-end britch of it where he stood.

Oh, he's out for loot, famished for blood,
And though already he's scoured the tint
And the gist and the good
From the anguished leaf in alembics full,
Still his hosts of flame through the thickets sprint,
Still equerries forth to kill and cull,
To despoil and dull
And sweep their radiances in flood
Down from the trees and into his mint.

The heart of a fiend and the hand of a thief,
Yet he grants such gold gavel and out-relief
To the patchwork slope it's all gold japanned
Like a wainscot still wet from a masterhand;
On the streamlet's bed the leaves and slud
Make a wrist-deep quilt, gold-tarlatanned,
Its eaves and gablings run blood.

SPRING AT A DISCOUNT

I.

Can they smell any Spring in Fleet Street?
There are blue-pencilled skies and green slashings of proofs in the press of this week;
There are damp and gummy uncrinklings in last night's news of the woods;
The pines are telegram pink, and willow withes sallow and sleek
As lies and manure from spectacled rumps where the ink's in flood.

Mandrils with brown-leather bags, and neuritis, and knuckly legs
Tear through the Fleet, or like gabbling goldfish revolve on their stools,
Diffusing dyspeptic comments like slimes of underdone eggs—
Yet the creeks are fat with the Spring and the croakings of frogs and fools.

II.

Can they smell any Spring at the tips?
The year's at the tap, and hæmetite Spring makes high tides in the mould;
Fæcals and slags and torpors are hoppering a league to sea;
And red of the smelt's on the moor, and mixer red's on the wold;
The red of the alder's like varnish, and rain on red pine-bark's like tea.

The year's at the tap but the belly of the blast is itching for ore;
And there's ladlings and puddlings of workers where the open hearth makes Hell,
Like the hosed and blistering pigs their sweats run tettering sore;——
Edge-blue of the steel is on lake, and beeches, and haars o' the fell.——

III.

Can you smell any Spring behind counters?
The gluey cloacinal cash of your grubbings is clean in its kin—
For shillings are smithereened rays on the water, or moons on wet slates;
Coppers are last year's leaves, and sovereigns sequins on whin;—
Your handlings have withered their largesse as verdigris ulcers your weights.

So come from your scrofulous parings, and policemen and dogdirt on kerbs
Where sewage goes in silks and phulnana, turd in menthol and astrakhan;
Hold your bazaar with the beanfields' smell, lilacs and parcels of herbs,
Open accounts with blue of the mists, and clean of the tan.

IV.

Can they smell any Spring in Lancashire?
Carding sheds have that dankness that is under the leaves of the limes,
Fleece on the feed-lattice is like heapings under the osiers upstream,
Reeling makes pyrotechnics, shuttles run pantomimes;—
The lasses have skins like a mushroom, their Spring is the torpors of steam.

For them the affluent palette of noon in the mills is but anilined print;
And bloom on the iris flower and on flags but nap on a battened frieze;
And chains on the loom of their being are cheapbottoms, shoddy and stint,
And the clack of their jennies the sjambok for kaffirs of industries.

V.

Do they smell the Spring in the shell-holes?
The officer's carcase had dropsy, and its chops were lichen-green;
His batman's had splashed on the point of a dud: the sergeant's trunk
Was concertinad like wire, with its cheek in a Boche latrine—
Spring is lush in the sumps where four years of charnel have stunk.

The tight stark riftings of six-inch guns are a genial tune!
But sarcasms blue on a bayonet have crusted the blues of the Chase;
And a gunshot's clotting of blood mimics the ploughland's maroon;—
The seasoned hearts of the shell-holes, they are the Spring of the race.

VI.

Has any man use for the Spring?
The business of man is to breed, and the bear on his market is Thought;
Essence of noon in his nostrils is attar of ovens of beef;
Upshrieking schoolyards are noon in his ears: his Spring is naught
But sex in the veins, food in the furrows, and vineyards in leaf.

AS THE DAYS LENGTHEN

When Vega in the flush of enterprise
Takes smoothly off upon his April flight,
For Summer voyages in the Southern skies,
For lonely ventures down the vast of night;
Then with his torch he seems to solemnise
The marching past, the progress from our sight,
The passing and the exile from our eyes;
Of all the phalanxes and clusters bright,
The planets, comets, and the companies
Of friends and old familiars and allies
That fill the Winter firmament with light.

Then is his coming like a voice that cries
Disarmament in heaven, and defies
One coward star to stay it out and fight
The long disheartening days, the drawn twilight
And swift uncourteous dawns that paralyse
Curtail and cut them short, and expedite
Their transit and withdrawal and demise.

For Vega's pointers seem to synchronise
Times and kalends, and to signalise
The prorogation and the forced respite
And condign closure that each year applies
To all the ancient chambers and the trite
Discussions of the stars; the heteroclite
Assemblies of exceeding godlywise
Old constellations, that, in their own despite,
Abandon April, make vacation right
In the hum of Spring, just when Nature vies
With Babel, and the session's at its height.

When Vega comes the April sky denies
Houseroom to the rest, issues and supplies
Their notice; all that conference of white
And hoary orators who moralise
Nightlong, and talk and transcendentalize
Through all the snows of Winter, now must bite
Their lips in impotence and throttled spite,
Exeunt omnes and their splendour dies.

Lengthening days outdistance them, and blight
And wash out all the emblems they devize;
And Vega's jewelled finger seems to write
Death-sentence on their scintillance, and quite
Abolishes and bans the rippling lies,
The pander and decamerons they recite
To enlaced lovers till the sun doth rise.

For nights tail off, already Vega flies
Like young ambition through the April skies,
Astounds the orient, and in his flight
Screams like a rocket through the dwindling night;
And flames most gaseously as though he tries
To split the zenith, and like dynamite
On his explosive path, to pulverise
More small the interstellar dust that lies
Twixt him and azimuth; as though he'd smite
Earth and moon, star and satellite,
Unseat the great ones down, and terrorise
And tyrant it in space, and compromise
And treat with none of them, but so chastise
And heckle all his rivals they'll unite
In cowardice, disband, retreat the fight,

Renounce their vigilance, demobilise,
Strike a pact with Vega, temporise,
Slip from the universe in sheer affright
And leave him there unparalleled in might.

They break and run, scattering from our sight
Before the lances of the lengthening day;
Proscribed and outlawed by a sun too bright,
Vetoed and forbidden to display
Their riches and enchantment and delight,
All, all depart, as though one shrivelling ray
Had put the whole immortal throng to flight.

SED MILES

All the best
Have long gone West;
The East is cursed
With all the worst;
In this, at least,
Our Farthest East
Is London Port,
A sick resort
Where all the blood
Of Mametz Wood,
And all the guts
Of Mesnil Buttes,
And that slight Hell
At Poelcapelle,
Are suet and duff
For a journalist puff;
And the whole dam War
Little more
Than "Latest News,"
And "Our Expert's Views."

It's often said
You're a long time dead,
And the grey worms eat,
Through the nails of your feet,
Through the white of your thighs,
To the whites of your eyes;
You feel pretty cheap
As a drab little heap
Of powder and smell;

For a Fritz gas-shell
Leaves more behind
In the way of rind.

But when West you go,
It's nice to know
You've done your bit
In spite of it;
And Blighty's name
And Blighty's fame
Will find in your
Demise, manure,
To sprout and spread
Till English red
Is the favourite hue
For Bartholomew,
And his maps all blush
With a porty flush,
And only Mars
And the minor stars
Are beyond the zone
Of the next War Loan;
When West you go,
It's nice to know
You've done your bit
In spite of it.

"SOLDIERS"

By a Pacifist

Drilled into Denseness;
Dressed by the drum in line, like grimacing cockshies at fairs,
Like dough, like Lot's old harridan, 'cept there's red in our veins;
Worked by the whistle like newsboys, or trams or tongue-lolling curs,
Till all we're worth is a clothful of suet and scrambled brains.

Gorged on to Glory;
They pad us like pythons with cow and vermilion carrion, and teach
Mess and the wet Canteen are the soldier's wings of Grace;
They suckle our heads with dumplings, and oil us with offal, till each
Swaggers the earth like its Maker,—with spots and a lavender face.

Cursed into Childishness;
In the Army a brain is an abscess, as proved by the Carmine Command;
Cursing is curing, and soldiers, like convicts or Borstal kids,
Must take their porridge and breeches, and God, of the Government brand;
And their spirits dry up like stale fish-heads to the size of baccy-spit quids.

Back to the Brute;
If famished, like fangs of the jungle, we'd rip the liver from Hell;
We'd bivouac in snow, if weary, or impartially doss with a whore;

If thwarted, then, heedless as apes, we'd spit on Death's beard, and tell
Brigadiers, and bastards, and sergeants, what soldiers are soldiers for.

Afterwards;
As the berg grinds free from the floe, all nations will break from the years;
These cannaille in field-grey and khaki have had flair of the red as it runs.
With that tigrish stench in its sweetness, they'll stir, when the tiger stirs,
On the Ox-heads who drilled 'em like dogs, and squandered their lives to the guns.

BELLICOSITY

Babel of Bellicose Man:
Ancient fanfares of slaughter hubbubing the rotund earth;
Babel of statesman and cretin, butcher and pulpiteer,
Whose din, catarrhic and gobbed with its phlegm of self and self-worth,
Lets three primary blarings persist from its formless blear.

Blare of the Patriot:
Downright as boilings of beef, and clean as his "Bedford cut";
A rosy rainbow of ribbons, a hygienic tad-polish norm,
Fond of brave meals and bad women, intolerably fond of good form,
Treating the baboonish nations to bayonets and twiddled gut.

Blare of the Pacifist:
A meatless, euclidean fool, flushed from his foozled clutch,
Clucks plush-covered peace to his hen-run, while Englishmen,
Clamouring like riderless stallions for goal, bung into touch
These that love all in the Cosmos, and spike Krupps with the nib of a pen.

Blare of the Scuppered:
A sob from the slain of all nations, the million passers-by
Who saw the empurpled placards roaring for war;
And stood from the mother's fender, and stepped out to die,
Shot down like a tenpenny rabbit, or gassed like an obsolete whore.

Babel of Bellicose Man:
But the hubbub lifts like a fog at the fresh-tapped hearths of dawn,
When the sad, bored voice of the Englishman thrashes in from the deep,
Scrubbed by the salt of his Englishry, pure from the covert and cheap,
Cleaning the world with his cleanness, English and gentleman born.

TO WILBUR WRIGHT

A hero, not in war,
With carnage of races
And the welter of gore
In the bayonet's embraces.
No captain of men to a futile fate
On the glorified field of rapine,
Where dull bestial force has its way,
And low passion full play,
And nations learn wisdom too late.
Where mankind shows its ugly worst;
Mad anger unchecked,
Homesteads wrecked
And devastation accursed.
Where heroes grapple a puny fame,
Blazing their path to a hero's name,
To an image in stone
And a marble plate
And paragraphs purring their praise to the skies,
By homester penmen agrin at their lies;
Though widows moan
And a desolate country may groan
And the nations learn wisdom too late.

A man of invention, skilled and shrewd,
Shaping invention's fruitful brood
From moulds poor and rude,
To these perfect final forms asoaring
Above the city's roaring;
Creating not killing,
Free from blood,
Stern for the cause of human good;

The whole stern force of a versatile mind,
Raising not wrecking the hopes of mankind.
No hero of words, subtle in sophistry,
Cloaking folly in syllabic mystery;
No epigrammatic monger of wit,
Ostentatiously unfit;
Nay silent and strong,
Not sneering, sneering a whole life long.
Surly and rough,
Yet eloquent enough
If deeds have tongues clamouring loud
Reaching the twopenny-hapenny crowd.

No hero king in august station
With the plaudits of a loyal nation,
Secure on high, the son of his sire;
Mayhap a liar,
Or lapped in desire,
But ever on high the son of his sire.

Indifferent to show,
Working unmoved
For a science he loved;
While the tides of fame might ebb and flow,
Working still to conquer and know.

Dauntless he toiled
With soul unsoiled,
Firm and lone as a snow-capped peak;
A peak of might
Rearing its height
To chasten the fool and strengthen the weak.

Dauntless he toiled
Unshaken by scoffing and laughter;

Eternal scoffing of fools in all ages,
Such were his wages,
While dauntless he toiled for the folk that come after.
There are fools whose minds cannot grasp
The strength of Man and the depth of his might,
Fools whose souls cannot clasp
The image of truth and of Right,
Of the Work and the Worker questing for light.
Fools dull poor fools,
Malevolent, nudging fools,
In rancourous spite.
Condemning Man, condemning his Arts
In the drab piffling spite of their envious hearts,
Tripping the toilers, arresting the toil
Able only to spoil
To filth and to soil.

Dauntless he toiled
To fight and fight
Till Life should draw to the shadows of Night;
Fought for his faith in that Western Land,
Builded at length the work of his hand,
To meet at last
The grateful blast
Of insult, public, unsuppressed,
Maligning his best;
To be named a liar and hinted a knave
Such the reward Europe gave
To America's best.
Rich and poor,
Wife and whore,
Journalist seers,
Engineers
Arose in their ire,
Laughed in their might, and named him a liar.

TO GERMAN SOLDIERS

I.

Overture

As we curse not the car for the smash-up, but the lout at the lever controls;
So khakimen curse only quitters, and field-grey bears not their grudge;
As funkermen snot you with untruths, one fighterman voice shall troll
A salt-fresh rune, like a headland to square-face the funkermen's sludge.

II.

Field-grey Fightermen

As the Dutchman is bold for his hearth, as the Cossack and Kurd for rapine,
So the Grey glues its back to the block-house, though skewbanked and stalled,
Sharing the sport of the killermen, sharing the right of the line,
Swinging no lead nor miking when the roster of courage is called.

Electric beavers of boudoirs, and sumptuous lovers of saps;
The sob of the soddish minny arrests not your sedulous spade;
For you, from your mouldy shoon to the crop in your red-ringed caps,
Are merlin-pioneers and moles of the sand-bag shades.

III.

Fightermen: Writermen

Home-press, foe-press, they're pimps and they're ponces of gamboge lies;
Their insults are stink, and their praises prussic for you in your rage
Of war, you fightermen in the fight, for you that despise
These fly-blown critics and liars, and the printed manure of their page.

Four years you've free-traded fatality, and paid to the perishing guns,
That spray such juice on the sandbags, cracking your skulls like cane;
Four, and your masters still slash you, you myriad surplus sons,
Like gads on the steaming river, like locust pests on the plain.

Four summers, from Liège to Langemarck, the field-grey has thriven on lead ——
Four springs has the grey goose flown from Stornaway, North to the floes ——
If Verdun's the vale of Gehenna, the Somme has seen one or two dead,
Khaki and Grey together, ripe carrion for killerman 'shows.'

As crump-hole differs from crump-hole, as mire may be softer than mire,
As the cut of their tunics won't help much when the men are maimed yet alive,
So killerman Grey and killerman Drab are oafs of one sire,
Settling problems of population with Mills, Number Five.

IV.

Turning Worms

The bear that dreamed through the cyclone will waken to cyclone the pine:
So will you, though mute through War's mistral, blaspheme when they cry for calm;
Then the gun-trail shall turn in the trench, and the breech shall make mistrals to whine,
Lament for the masters who sounded the killermen's tatoo to arm,

They were flung like putrescence, or stalks, to the middened field.
Field-grey and field-khaki, field fellows, articled mates of the kill;
They shall turn that trade on their tyrants, and richmen shall richly yield
Offal and life for the killerman, craving their sustenant swill.

The curtain falls, but the killerman keeps to his chaos track;
Stampedes the land that bore him, tumults the towns of his birth;
Until ancestral dazzle-lace generals pay bloodily back
Youth to the young, love to the lovers, hope to the earth.

TO OLD MEN

I.

Discard

The fields, in their age, have garbage burnings; the wolverine pack
Inexorably puts to the fang their fangless and aging sire;
The Comanche drops his aged squaws to a trysting with death by the track;
But our fishlipped rancid old men in their age are funked of Hell Fire.

Old fat men with walrus chins making folds to their bellypot;
False palates like suction-pumps clogged with post-prandial squelch;
Their bloodlust obesely o'er swells, like kneadings of dough growing hot,
From talk that has queer semicolonic sighings, and alcohol belch.

Old thin tallow-candle kind of men with a nasal leak,
Whose life is an arthritic criminal record, a chronicle of wraps,
And a quailing spuriously forth of Christian behests to be meek;
Even cheap Death is never at home to their sempereternal taps.

II.

Old Noses

Old men have jubilant Shaltnots of cash, and chalk in their joints,
Pokings of fires and of all day noses in youth's affairs;
As sweet as a corpse on the tide, or the arctic dank that anoints
A slab in the dripping morgue; and as welcome as mangebitten bears.

Red full-rationed old men who telephone troops to the kill;
Red cocks among red-haggled lads who lick the blood of their spurs,
Whose red readiness of smug "sirring's" the comic relief on the bill,
For others that dribble calamity in No Man's dement of the flares.

Unclassed rejected old men, febrilely recruiting the fit;
Self-insisted unfit to be strewage of muck for the guns,
Reject your chair from the talk round the fire where fightermen sit,
Out to the unconsiderate death you see in the face of your sons.

YOUTH

I.

Flames of the hearth have stridencies, fierce guffaws, and are young;
Young are the agitations and Leaf-Green laughing of streams;
Young the bravas of the saps in the branch where the thrush has sung.
Young is the throbbing of pistons, and passion of throttled steams.

Youth is the frog in green leapings, a côte-d'azur gull on the wing;
Youth, in the faro-saloons of life, is the naphtha light.
Sharpened flames in the womb of our mothers paid for the thing;
Thought is decay, it shingles their gift like a leprous blight.

Youth is the fulminate stuff in grenades, to splode through the drabs
Of overcoats, pavements and noon; Youth is the juice in the coil,
To alternate glamour and cockatoo greens, like dynamic stabs,
Through the chalk of shop-soiled veins and the parchment and tetter of toil.

II.

Youth Athletic

To run swallowing sweat for mile on mile like a Zulu; to pant
Hot cochineal praise to the dawn; to field all a flanneled day,
To dribble the white from the touch-line, suavely and dilettant;
To bay like a bull for the cleanness of thews and lungs and the clay

An athlete's bath from a frosty beach, then eggs and ale,
And porridge snowed up with cream, and napery pure as the snow.
To dine at the Club from a card as full as a pheasant's tail;
To lounge and puff otiose rings and let old time go.

Striding in draft to the rataplan is cement to the chin,
Old lilts to the lips, and magnetic steels to the rifleman.
Brown feel of a tent, haggard white of the watch, and a corpse's grey grin
Make him to march facing level as only the fightersort can.

III.

Youth Amorous

As moose bellows moose on the slope where the Douglas firs cut the moon;
So youth would rampage the lumber through, for the lust of his hour.
Moths find the stephanotis bland with balsams and swoonings of June;
Ladies are silky cajoling liquors impressed from the flower.

Their limbs in their undulations are suave as the progress of cats;
Glazed as bell-heather, and pink as the birch in its tattering of bark,
Are the pigments riding their skins, like pennants in crammed combats,
Like blood-flecks in the pallors of petals and in lips where kissings make mark.

Their looks have the candour of lakes, the confineless blue of the plains;
Their tresses stampede from their napes like flarings that draw from the hearth,
Like niagaras reddled in the setting, stallions with dawn in their manes;
Their smell is the fondling of breasts, their fabrics the smellings of wrath.

IV.

Youth Citybound

The Dread, the Uncertain drive sheep, and baboons, to entente and flock;
So fracas of latterday Thought drives men to the foolery of towns;
Where a man, not knowing the face of God from the face of a clock.
Rubs him as raw as an ape with the routines of clerks and clowns,

Yet cities have many colours: ice-blues nebulously cling
To the white of churches; arc-lamps on drizzled flags are blood;
The purples of fogs are hushed, but hoarding purples sing:
Traffic and women's ankles are kaleidoscopic and good.

V.

Youth Poetic

Since the jelly-speck grew to the chimpanzee man has made crowds;
Yet the dense aloneness of woods is well; and moors
Have mauves and ululations, and the comely passings of clouds;
Wide spaces have smell of singing, and ribboned pink road has allures.

Gorse on the downs, and daffodils, are gold without greed;
Yellows splashing the pastures are youths in the dance of the Sun;
Treblings of birds are periwinkle blue; the speed
And susurrous of breezes green, and a marsh is havannah and dun.

The flying of ducks is a claymore, and kestrels the stab of guns;
Furrows and tillage are rich clean wounds in an old-time charge;
Like silks and musk by the river, the whitethorn's valencing runs.
Chestnuts are lighted pagodas, and poplars high priests by the marge.

There is a sheen that smiles round the purple ridgings of ploughs,
That rides on the raven's back, and flirts on the feathering blades;
It lives in Levantine chanties, and laurels of Caesar's brows;
It smells of hissing rains, and the combings of Saxon maids.

Dust-eddied places of ships upgathering their fistfuls of wave
Like fastidious silks; indocking, spindrift light, on the flow;
Crepuscular gloom from the funnels, like goings of folk by a grave;
And swills of a collier out-trekking, like a hearse or an old hoodie crow.

VI.

Envoi

The diary of youth is recordings of mercury, rockets and fake;
An arras of golden crusadings, in the draught of an Outer Court;
Thought is the greyness and lead in the lifting threads of its make;——
It brings green musts to the glamour, and the make of illusion to naught.

THE CLUB

Springsong

The day tastes green, and the woods smell blue, and electric Spring
Scribbles wireless mems to the veins of Love and the trees;
But rancid folk in the streets just spit on the kerb and sing
"Petrol smells kingfisher blue and horse-dirt green as the seas."

In the Club

The stuffing of guts of their chairs may once have galloped the gales;
But the anthropoids of that bald-headed room are unfresh and drab
As shiny behinds; for they squat, paunched-up on their vanished tails,
With beards like leads in a drizzle, and eyes like a closing scab.

Outside

The bank is rosy with breeze, and hysteria seethes in the sun;
Toffeed bulbs on the chestnut, and cherubic sycamore nubs
Burst each grinning stitch; and the side-splitting mavis shrieks fun
At the grilled gummy-lid apes in the mercuric must of the clubs.

In the Club

Scrofulous rooks on garbage, and microbes munching on sore
Are less unfresh and perspiring and sad than that fill-belly brawl;
And air that has drained and dribbled through ten miles of town is a whore ——
Meats' and members' and still-room smells, gleet, and run beads down the wall.

Outside

The rock garden whispers a waifish scent, like a far barcarolle;
The crooning of doves is dried roses, patchouli the piping thrush;
The turf has a tang of a Harris tweed: a dropsical mole,
From his Club-heap, strains ears to hearken the perfumes of saps in the bush.

In the Club

Old grey souls in a mad-house will leer and giggle and point:
To stink at an unburied Ching in the rice the grey jackals flit:
Even such in the Club are the cod-offal cheeks and paunchfuls of joint,
And cigars and crones and palavering hyenas, and corpses that spit.

Outside

The Japanese quince is all poppy-red coals; the almond-flower
And peach have the flush that, fawn-like, hides in the heart of a pearl,
And seldom lives but in lady's cheek or sunset hour.
The air is weft of flaxen silk like a locket curl.

In the Club

Blossom-time was when you urchined and reddled your knees and leaped,
Like varnished frogs at the flies; and the radium flipped in your veins.
Only, from red of the clay, from the arable of all you have reaped,
The shine of the Club, on your rump and your blue-point nose remains.

A HERO

My father, when I went to war,
Grasped me with a podgy paw,
"Good-luck," he said, "My precious lad
"See you do credit to your dad,
"You're no age yet, you have the spunk,
"I'd hate like Hell for you to funk.
"If I could march I'd slope a gun
"And help exterminate the Hun.
"If my legs were twenty-five years younger
"I'd ginger up the German Junger."

"Stout words, old dad, perhaps you're right,
"Pity you're too old to fight,
"Pity you're not Peter-Pan,
"Your Belly's like a beer-can;
"Their's backbone in your senile chatter,
"As much as in a pot of batter."

"My boy your simile's cheap and wooden,
"Batter bakes us Yorkshire pudden,
"And that's the stuff to give you guts,
"And make you putt those ten-yard putts.
"I'd try to 'list' as under forty
"But the Bible says deceit is naughty.
"Ah would," he sighed "this ghastly war
"Had come but thirty years before."

"I'm with you there, I quite agree
"That date would just have done for me
"And incidentally done for thee."

"Your wits are keen, I once suspected
"Your moral assets were neglected;
"You intellectuals make me quiver,
"You load the brain, but bleach the liver.
"But now you've got a blood-hound's chance
"To find your manhood out in France.
"What finer finish to education
"Than perishing for your pater's nation?
"Go, and hold it no effrontery
"To croak it for your king and country."

"Good-bye dad, a thousand thanks
"For giving me to swell the ranks;
"Your magnanimity's no small dose,
"You run old Abraham quite close;
"God will requite our sacrifice
"With expensive seats in paradise."

"Good-luck, my lad, should you perchance
"Return a trifle soiled from France—
"I'm despatching you upon approval,
"So keep me primed with all the 'nouvelles'—
"My welcome will be unreserved,
"I'll shake such limbs as you've preserved
"And find the job that you've deserved."

Off I went and saw the war
And thought it all a bloody bore;
I clawed and scratched for home and beauty,
And tramped some hundred miles for duty.
I cursed and dug and dropped a limb,
And leaked blood enough to dowse my glim.
My father almost wept an ocean,
But bore up, for I'd won promotion.

Discharged at length as no more use,
I felt like Portland broken loose;
I came back to a grateful land—
They tactlessly forgot the band—
My father seemed a bit put out
To see the hand I'd come without.
His welcome was at best reluctant,
Altruism's not a good inductant.

"I'll make allowance for your loss,
"In spirit, not in filthy dross,
"But times are bad, and living high,
"The government's like a giblet pie.
"You can't expect with one hand dud
"To run a blasted racing stud.
"Perhaps if I have any luck,
"I'll find a job to suit your book."

He found it, deep down in a bank,
A concession to my captain's rank,
And now, with sixty bob a week,
I lack a limb but get my keep.
Besides I've got a decoration;

I'm grateful to my pater's nation.

TO PHILIP

Philip in Person

His jowl is as blue as a bottle, and the forelock is black on his skull,
Semitic he is, and squat as the dusk of a London day;
But the high-tension arcs of ambition flash, sultanic and full,
In his Papuan lushness of lip, and his eyes like the kris of Malay.

Philip in Parley

He speaks, cajoling, as when to the foothills the syrinx of Krishna plead;
Then, sudden, his challenge clangs like guns in the traffic of fleets;
Then, calm, while his sarcasms scalpel the green flesh of Greed
Through to the bone of a radical thought for the Eastermost Streets.

As coronas and kingly cognacs waltz round with the walnuts and wit,
Pearls pirouette from his lips, and diamonds turn in his eyes;
And he burbles mayhap like the bulbul, or pecks like a sardonic twit,
With a twitch of his pan-pipe eyebrow, and patrician employment of lies.

Philip in Poplar

Just as effluent sluices of sludge from this Poplar belate the old Thames;
Just as Lazarus, and all the Discarded, engorge her intestinal ways;

So the spittle and slag of her kerbs clart his tongue with their phlegms,
And set him to almond-hard silence, or a cough and a disgruntled gaze.

Philip on Patrol

Up line there's rapid fire like havoc of snapping bones,
And a radiance of flares, like tapeworms, nibbling the night to its soul,
And hooters whimpering of chlorine, and fragrance of camomile cones ——
Yet the watch perks his nose a bag higher—Phil's on patrol.

Philip in Particular

We vagabonded together the pavements of Faded Faiths;
Lashing our tops to Laughter, hooking our hoops to Truth.
And the spinning chromes of thy compost were light, as a rout of wraiths;
But those I found prime in thy heart were the tenderest roses of ruth.

Philip in Prophecy

The drizzle and shale of daybreak twist to our setting of snows;
And that Figure, bestriding his Tyrol of travail for those on the plain,
Was our Philip out for his grind on the Gogs; and the crystal shows
The tongue that will speak for England, the brain that is England's brain.

TO AN ARCH-HERETIC

The Churches, that fell defaulting to strains of thy heretic lute,
Shall be scaffold and trope in this chanting made to a logical loon;
Their womanish bellied cupolas, and stripling frettery and flute,
Shall be corner-stones of these stanzas, and rubrics to every rune.

The minarets of Mecca are squat to the stairs to thy Den,
Where the blatant crass bizarrery, and langour of stuff,
Makes it a romany room, an irregulous, infidel pen ——
Though the flair of the prawn at its portal is dogmatic enough.

The Paladins great in the Church were crashed in thy life's crusade,
Were wax and less solemn than sponge: thy lion-heart fury of deeds
Asks no prate of the priest-box; thy ruthless heathen blade
Still seeks the zany vizor in carcase of Crusted Creeds.

The Piazza of St. Mark's is measurable by man;
But the atlantic span of thy mind, like the width of seraph wings,
Is urbane and lush, and unfenced as the pastures of Pan;
Though the Bishops would call it a Hell, a sahara of soulless things.

The façades of Saint Sophia are the type of thy mind's arabesque;
With gargoyles and dimpled ingles, and tracery of volute and twist;
Where goblins dance on the lecterns, and dogsheads gowp from the desk,
And Muezzin sits locking his thumbs; and Charity droops unkissed.

The Purging Pyre of the Parsee assuages the womb of travail;
But the pangs, that were sharp at thy coming, go wayfaring down thy days,
Goading thee on to that Leaguing that shall win to the Holy Grail—
Till each trowel that scrapes in the mortar shall share in the mansion it lays.—

The Church of the Celt is chap-red, and its pewful of piety clay;
But the callous red brick in its redness is not so carbolic and crude,
And its tepid tea of devotion not so creamlessly grey,
As the Man of thy soulless mission, and his Mate of thy feverish feud.

As the Church of Saint Aidan set on Iona gave warmth to his word,
So the flints of thy infidel soul blandly and ever subscribe
Roof-tree and discourse and raiment, syrups, and solace and curd,
To the few that fare forth from Zebulun, handling the pen of the scribe.

The car of the Goddess of Reason lifts thee to thy Promised Land,
With gamins of War whipped before thee, and Peace to thy axle bound:
And the spires of all the Churches shall crumble to thy command,
And their Faith shall skulk to the pits, and their God be dung on the ground.

To feel like one who's sinned and earned the wage,
And hears on earth the tolling of his knell . . .

* * * *

To feel like one who enters in a cage
Defies the mineshaft, and, as in a spell,
Hears them shout All Clear; hears the bell,
Then seems to dream he's falling; seems an age
Uneasily descending, hears the foreman yell,
And through a long tube sees the equipage
Of circling constellations come to shine
Bluely up above; hears the cable whine,
The whimpering of the ropeway, and the rage
And friction of the kibble 'gainst the well,
Its grim hydraulic cadencies, the fine
High-pitched responses of the line;
And sees the shaft-wall like a donjon cell,
Dripping, oozy; feels his cheeks as well
With drippings scalded, smarting, saline . . .

* * * *

And sniffs at crimson stenches as they swell
Like lava from the entrails of the mine;
Tar and timber, coal-dust, fungus smell;
Some firm as faith, some lewd and infidel,
And some unindividualised, condign
And sharp but not familiar to define;
Some trembling upwards like a solenelle,
Some subterranean, others fresh as brine . . .

* * * *

So dreams he's falling, feels the pit confine
And bandage him about; himself supine
Spreadeagled, powerless to rebel . . .

* * * *

Then wakes to hear the grimy gaffer tell
The headwaysman to hew more parallel,
And thinks those level accents sound divine;
And thinks him how that flimsy cradle fell
And shot on sooty pinions down the line,
Straight as a demon down the flues of Hell,
Or Hell's own image in a Durham mine.

Tumult of furnaces;
Red and ominous, splashing with flame the wash of the river;
Red and seethed as a jungle dawning, transfused through the mist;
Red as the ebb-swilled flats at sunfall, glazed and a-quiver;
Red, and primordially dour, as the Hell of the Yiddish Christ.

Tumult of furnaces;
Intoned, sacramental, the roaring that climbs from the blasts;
Eery their asthmic vomiting, baffling the sloth of the night;
While the long geyser flames tongue and leer as the darkness lasts
Staining the low-banked clouds with the bubbling crater's light.

Tumult of furnaces;
An imminent muttering of workers, that fodder and pasture the flames,
Hunched and reticent and straining, like ogre-driven gnomes of the earth;
Yet the menace limps through their glance as they brood on their shames,
And they dream they are fuelling tall autodafés for wealth and high birth.

Tumult of furnaces;
And where our Benarés, we fakirs, vagrant through dead-lock and strife?
For the ore-feasted Brahma of Ingots straddles his bulk on the track,
Rusting the plain with his belchings, and stifling the green from life,
While we Juggernaut serfs of his Progress throng for the hooves on our back.

THE CAUSE

The misery of the many for the welfare of the few,
The holocaust of millions to keep warm the one or two.

The men of slaughtering armies march
Through glare, through gloom, in millions on to strife;
They march together to the drum and fife
As one, while simian savagery runs rife,
And misused minds in dust and hubbub parch.

Together march they to the drum and fife,
The legions stumbling down to death's exile;
Each glazing carcase of the swollen pile,
Unseeing, fishlike, seems with damaged smile
To lisp one terse undamaged truth, the while
The battle's paid for by the rank and file.

A truth the Cause of Labour cannot scamp:
When to the clash of steel, the champ
Of whinneying chargers we defile,
That torch of truth above the pensile
Standards of the Cause we'll soundly clamp,
The battle's paid for by the rank and file.

No bastard truth, although both birth and stamp
Dislikeable and vile;
The battle's paid for by the rank and file,
The feeblest footsore slogger in the camp
Must set the pace to which our millions tramp.

Nor shall our old campaigning bullies wreak
Intolerance on the smallest of the small;
We battle for the people not for Saul,
Then set aside all narrowness and pique
And onward to the mines beneath the wall,
And let the stalwarts of our choice withal
Not overshadow but secure the meek,
Nor God nor Cæsar has our souls in thrall;
The breach is widening in the outer wall,
The price is havoc, but the prize unique,
Then onward in ordeal, strong with weak,
Together triumph or together fall.

One Cause, one all-accommodating style,
And one enlisted thought, to reconcile
The pace of strong and weak, nor in our ardour damp
The clownish, nor the dull-head without guile,
But step together down that final mile,
That truth before us swinging its good lamp,
The battle's paid for by the rank and file,
Some salients yet to cut, some mines to tamp.

When freedom through the kennelled streets of Gaul
Like acid flowed, the tumbrils seemed to creak
Equality; to-day our market-platforms shriek
Equality; and, if the stock is worthy of the stall,
Then equality's the guerdon of us all,
Not vested in a fleshpot-swilling clique;
Nor yet a matter of mere freak
And blown-out bellystuff for cads to bawl,
Who pink advertisement and shekels seek,
And, convenient tongue in cheek,

Employ the Cause for cover as they crawl,
Sliming its slogans with beguiling sleek
And gaseous blatancies that reek
Of self, and in puffed pleurisy, recall
The punctured bladder of a bounceless ball.

Equality should like an unguent leak
To assuage the bandied bitterness and gall
That sweats from human friction, and the streak
Of jungle in the human brawl.

Then let our hosts assemble to one call,
Unfeignedly together, strong with weak,
Let this Equality we spout and speak
Dictate the daily judgments of us all,
And overflow in action, not in bleak
High windy words, and phrasey scrawl;
One pace, one step, for Peter, as for Paul,
The strong must tarry to urge on the weak.

Equality's the master of our yawl,
The bird of Concord glistens on our peak,
No dove of pulpits with a carrion's beak,
But sterling as the salt-white sea, eke
The marker of our courses, fair or squall.

Our Cause is no insomnia-cure, a drawl
Of mumbled syllogistics from the Greek,
But graphic faith, for cottage as for hall,
We serve a seven, not a one-day week.

The Cause has those who hate it, so has Truth,
They call it twaddle, but their poisoned quill,
Was rendered sterile by that twaddle's growth.
Their instinct is the skunk's with added skill
In stinks and propaganda, and in shrill
Effervescent hissings whose uncouth
Malarial cheapnesses distil
As libel into print, and do no ill
Not even to the authors of such swill;
Their poison-sacs cost nothing to re-fill,
They smell their way through ordure like a sleuth.

Disease is their one function, and they fill
It better than a bacillus, they instill
Both stimulant to us who drive the drill
And chloroform for truth,
Until our brains are blank, resistance nil;
And so they keep us twitching at the mill,
Preserve in misery yet not quite kill
The generations swindled of their youth.

They rode our fathers' backs, they ride us still;
Compassion is not theirs, they know not ruth,
Their faith is like a shark, its blood is chill,
Three in One their faith is, God His will,
Their scruples and their sixpences forsooth;
The rank and file of Labour pay the bill.

Yes, deadly foes beyond our bivouac prowl
But deadlier friends lie snarling in the tent;
For these cry Wolf, and with our faces bent
To sight the firelit fang, to hear the howl
And prologue of the raid, with foul
Unfended ease do their intent,

Yet when their stabbings and alarums subside,
When we inspan our oxen to the pole,
The Cause is still within us to extol
The forward trek, and treachery defied.

Though one horned devil with our horsemen ride,
Who clicks his heels and answers to the roll,
And though backslidings, snake, and covered hole
For once may catch us skidding in our stride,
The cloven hoof once in our traces spied
He nevermore endangers that patrol;
The Cause keeps on, the ranks do not divide.

Though one amongst us take the traitor's dole,
Once and once only does the Cause confide
Its tenets to a thief, and once belied
Iscariot's a corpse; the crows condole,
But with his exit we have twelve beside.

His ways were sidelong and his weapons forged
In our good trust and franked with our good name,
Our Cause but helped him to a squinting fame
Which on the rack of truth shall be disgorged,
And leave him putrid on his Aceldame.

Every Cause has its Judas; on the whole
We chum together, cheek by jowl,
Our old evangels and our babes untried;
The night grows haggard, and though thrice denied
The Cause still smiles; its testaments abide
To succour tribes and millions and console
Its stricken pioneers far and wide.

Have we not drudgery upon our side,
To teach that courage which means self-control?
Splitted fingers, wrinkles stiff with coal
And nails wherein an eight-hours' slime has dried
Not falsely witness that the Cause decried
Has still advantaged from the sweat they stole.
The Labouring Cause, thank God, can still provide
A proof of heroes for the martyr's rôle.

Our handclasp is but clay, the cloddiest mole
Could smell we're not too cleanly; our speech is dyed
In garbled scarlets like a barber's pole;
Our Eton schooling never signified,
Our coarseness screeches like a hobnailed sole
Upon the kerb where mostly we reside,
We're always spitting and dissatisfied.

Yet, grimy mouths may keep a clean parole;
Remember this, you smoothshanks who deride,
You scribes who also spit, whose rigmarole
Slips the fuddled issues at the poll,
Remember and let tolerance decide,
Grim Persecution's always been our guide,
Our blistered palms still pay her ugly toll,
With dull outpourings from our trodden pride
Unstinted sacrifice has filled her bowl.

Our Cause is clean, no need to step aside,
It won't contaminate, but better not collide
With Labour's broadened shoulders in your stroll;
The Cause expands, the starved, the vilefied
The rank and file of Labour still enrol.

We sign no dodgers not yet ship with sneak;
Trick and trick, the tiniest with the tall
We stand our equal lookout to the trawl,
We stand our equal spell, and when we speak
The moorings of our call,
And when dawn lights our landing in the creek,
We shared the nightwatch, and we share the haul.
Though intimidation's shadows scud oblique
To foul our fairway with their smutty pall,
That tempest has no menace to appal.

And murk and defamation may not hide
The flames of Retribution round our goal,
Red as bruised lips of such as spoke and died
Courageous for the Cause, for all the Cause implied.
Then with that Cause engrafted on your soul
And to your very heartstrings tied,
Resolve to be aboard this coming tide,
Let grimy mouths for once keep clean parole
And to that resolution stand allied.

And so, for sake of raising money,
She thought she'd be an old man's honey;
He was close on sixty-eight,
His teeth were in an awful state,
His eyes were sore, his beard dribbled;
His ears like biscuits rats have nibbled;
She was half his age and dressed
Like twenty-six when at her best.

He'd sons and daughters aging well,
And they all hated her like Hell
Because they'd thought to spend the cash
That she would now, the common trash!
They called her "ma" and "step-mammam"
And wouldn't know her on the tram.

They were cruel, but far far worse
The nights in bed with that old hearse;
The shut-eyed vertigo, the slobber,
His beard, his lips of india-rubber!

Their lodger worked on nights at puddling,
So, in due course, it came to cuddling;
They did their loving on the stair,
The old man pottered everywhere
And by the fire the bleared old codger
Grinned like a ghoul upon his lodger.

At length she said, with her firm thumb
She'd throttle him to Kingdom Come.

That very night she said she'd do it
And fix the darn old bag of suet;
The lodger said "You are a tart,
They'll think he died of his weak heart."

That night the dark was like a bear
It seemed to claw and smother her;
Her bed-mate breathed so sweet and mild,
He seemed as lennock as a child.
She was hot, and in her ear
Her heart was throbbing cruel and queer,
Then suddenly she swore by God,
She'd finish him the useless sod!
His gizzard slithered like a rag;
She wrung it like a pudding-bag.

But quick she knew she'd met a master:
Her grip was snapped like Paris plaster,
Two wrenching talons scratched her throat
As biting-wiry as a stoat;——
The old man let her swoon at length,
A miracle was his thin strength!
He turned his back and punched the bed;
"That's how my first wife died" he said.

SALTBURN WOODS

I.

When Saltburn Woods awaken with the Spring,
And Northern suns foolhardily regain
All Cleveland as their heritage, and strain
And cudgel at old Winter till they wring
That bleak coast from him, and usurp his reign,
And bar the dastard from re-entering
To make white waste of that enclosed domain . . .

* * * *

When sunshafts shake their lances and do bring
Their columns and their cohorts to sustain
Victorious April as their suzerain;
When season goads at season, king at king . . .

* * * *

When Northern gales and blizzardries restrain
Their arrogance and rage and rioting;
When Winter's corpse is piled up with the slain,
With all his gang of oafs that helped him ring
The woodlands round about with stink and stain,
And left the trees like skeletons to swing
Gaunt and gruesome on their scaffolding . . .

* * * *

Well, when April's here and Winter on the wane,
And footpaths firmer, and the squelch and mud
And clagginess no longer close the wood,
Then those first steps that take me there again
Are, as it were, in sleep, and to my brain
Narcotic, as though mayhap I should
Inhale sweet-scented death from some raw pine,

And, gasping, fall and nevermore intrude
Or wake to trespass on their solitude.
I'm fay and frantic, and the glades contain
Such spirits and seductions as design
To kill and hide me; I know the great trees feign,
Tugging at their roots, in swift incline
To squash me like a rat; the Jessamine
And thong-like Bryony are more than fain
To lash me round the throat, and in disdain
Just throttle me forthwith, and then assign
My carcase to a cave hung down with vine,
To soak there and grow rancid in the rain.

And hags there are in hollow branches mewed,
That watch each step I take along the strewed
Reluctant track; and down that serpentine
Perplexing pathway sniggering goblins line
The route, and hindering vapours spewed
From Tophet, dun and thickening there, decline
And hold the way; and voices saturnine
Inhabit in those vapours, and there brood
Abusive, and pout out spite and threatenings lewd,
And acid oaths, and curses alkaline; . . .

* * * *

And hags and mists and voices all combine
To stay my faltering footsteps through the wood;
And every breath is like an anodyne,
And every breath I take is like strong wine,
Puts me in bondage, balters up my blood,
Wraps tingling linens all along my spine,
And sends such horrors through this flesh of mine,
Such apprehensions, such a poisonous flood

Of fears and doubts, and strangely tense malign
Uncanny thoughts, treacherous, clandestine . . .

* * * *

I feel as though my nerves had gone for good,
I feel all dross, prostrate before a shrine
Endeavouring in the darkness for a sign;
I feel as though my soul in durance stood,
I feel the wincing flames, they intertwine
As do the limbs of Christ upon a rood;
On which same cross am I, and in that mood,
I stand twixt Hell and vultures and resign
My body and my all to their rapine;
I in the galleys stand, and feel the rod,
Tortured and undaunted, like a God
Unconcerned, impenitent, divine . . .

* * * *

II.

When April's here and Winter on the wane,
When, like a fiend, the north-east hurricane
No longer harasses, no more seems to sling
Sleets and voices from the neighbouring main
Across the front, against the terracing
Of pious white-brick villas, racketting
Like rice upon the slates, pummelling in vain
At chimney cowls, to ricochet and fling
Like rattling bones upon the bedroom pane,
That writhes and shudders like a sentient thing.
When voices cease and vicious waves refrain
From all their onslaughts and their inrushing;
When clouds like corsairs cease from harrying

The Cleveland coast that, like an iron chain
Of nabs and dunes and headlands, seems to strain
Against the ocean; when clouds no longer swing
Up like flights of ravens on the wing,
Up like blackened ensigns of the Dane
That go before him on his ravaging.

* * * *

Clouds, that heading inland, seem to bring
Rovers and marauders in their train,
To drive upcountry and to slash amain
Up past Huntcliffe, down the draughty plain,
Down the vale like Vikings, pillaging
Like pagan hosts through Rushpool, trumpeting
Through Saltburn Woods, up and out again
On their destriers, till they draw the rein
Where swathes of bracken and of dry drab ling
On Guisborough Moor this many a month have lain,
A lair for curlew, snipe and sanderling;
And there disperse and cease from foraging,
Where Skelderskew and its old Celtic fane
Of bald and weathered boulderstones ordain
That Eskdale shall be free from freebooting,
From foes predatory and from fires profane.

When waves with streaming bosoms no more deign
To foster tempests nor let storms constrain
Their nakedness and suck the frothering
From milky breasts; when storms at last abstain
From outbreaks, onsets, spleenish bothering;
When clouds like stallions black whose bellies drain
The blacker ocean dry, no more complain
That they're unslaked, and still need mothering
At ocean's pap, when clouds cease clamouring

To stuff them fuller than they can contain;
When from their riven bowels no more rain,
Nor vomitings of hail, nor drizzling;
When clouds like stallions black with matted mane
Canter off to seek new pasturing,
And, pounding from the canvas, no more feign
They're part and items of the painted Spring.

* * * *

When all those sleets and voices cease to ring
Whose cradle is the Pit; when one campaign
Has conquered March, and April doth maintain
Peace and amnesty; when everything
Observes the pact; when warmer days obtain,
And hints and indications seem to cling
To the shininguess of branches in the rain;
Hints shown forth more comforting and sane
Now nights are mild, and daylight has its fling,
No frost at dawn, and dusk is lengthening;
Hints and beckoning hopes men entertain
Whose hearts are sick at Winter's sojourning . . .

* * * *

When tamer seas resume their calm conversing,
And gales relinquish and the tempest dies;
When, in that sea without horizon merging,
The sky grows tamer too, and clarifies
Most equably; when sapphire seas to skies
As sapphire seem to be discoursing,
And sea to sky and sky to sea replies; . . .

* * * *

Then every heart-beat seems to galvanize
Your nerves and receptivities, replenishing

Your frame afresh, arms and bones and thighs,
The pith and every jot that doth comprise
Your make-up; yes, every gladdening
And spontaneous breath of you supplies
A strong strange potency, an overwhelming
Briskness to your sense, thereby enhancing
Your perceptions so that every dullest noise
That stirs the leaves, the lowest slightest rustling,
Seems overpitched, seems to cauterize
And scrape you like a knife, to agonise
The rawness and the salted quivering
Of your flesh; the fondling breeze electrifies
Your still constricting arteries and tries
Your self-restraint; an exhiliration flies
Twitching to your fingertips; a coursing
And confusing current in your veins unties
Latent thoughts, imprisoned thoughts that rise
And tear your soul, thoughts that maldevise
And leave you hapless, leave you throbbing
Like an engine overtaxed, vibrating,
Plunging, and distracted, madness in your eyes
And through your heart the cursiveness of Spring. . .

* * * *

Then all your brain-cells seem to energize
Dynamically, as though by strengthening
The conflict in your mind, by torturing
Your stolidness, they seek to neutralise
The clay that makes you, and to mobilise
All your faculties for unfaltering
Double stress and double suffering.
Then every red drop in you multiplies
The season's virulence, embellishing

Its toothsomeness, its charm, and its appealing
Joy; and all your powers functioning
Full pelt seem to war against and bastardize
The will; then every concentrated second plies
Your girth and veins with reinforcing
And impulsive fires that spiritualise
The Man, cleansing out the Brute, instilling
In you new delights and new endearing
Virtues, new acceptances, new ties,
Strength to feel, and skill to sympathize.

III.

When purple twigs are puzzled to retain
The swollen sap that from the inmost ring
Soaks and percolates throughout the grain;
When trees are all empurpled and o'erlain
With silver dust and spice and powdering;
When catkins tumble from the willow cane,
And sleek unfolding lindens once more bring
The bees about them; when the bourgeoning
Elms are loud with sparrows bickering;
When swifts fly low as though to ascertain
The damage done by gales, low and twittering . . .

* * * *

When Saltburn Woods awaken with the Spring,
You'd like to put the clock back and remain
In Saltburn Woods, in April, and in love again
With every stone and stream and living thing.
You'd like to wipe the past clean from your brain,
Sponge it from the retina, erasing
Words that scarred you and detraction's stain,

Scrawls of pedantry, daubs that appertain
To love; heavy jokes foregathering
In friendship; eulogies, flattering
Lies that live as long as truth; the wane
Of cheap ambition, smudged, the little vain
Italics of the worldly-wise, the scribbling
Of popularity whose tongues enchain
The strong; block capitals of those twain
Prosperous tradesmen, success and humbugging
Humility; breadwinning, a yellow blain
Upon the mind; blot all out, nor yet retain
One iota of Life's chronicling;
Content with none of these
Save grief alone, the pencil-marks of pain;
Accepting tribulations since they bring
Their increment of scorn; through them you gain
A noble apathy, a fine disdain
To reconcile and use you to Death's sting.
The usual joys of life remembering,
How tousled up they were and how inane,
You'll print Oblivion, and print it plain,
Write it down in rubrics in red lettering,
And thank the woods that helped you to attain
The truth that life's a farce . . . peoples, king,
And priest, the galling lot of them . . . and to arraign
The scarlet vehemence in your every vein.

IV.

When birds in April come agossiping,
Some with ditties set, others whose refrain
Is one long peroration of insane
Lunacies and love songs in unending string:

When Warblers set the woodlands echoing
And affably foregather down the lane,
As though despatched and bounden to explain
Rumours peradventure on the wing,
Rumours and prognostics of the reign
Of summertide in Cleveland and Cockaigne.

When Whitethroats sermonise, and Blackbirds sing
Deeper than the Thrush who, in disdain,
Taunts his rival as an underling
Mute and moping, not a note or strain
Three seasons through, till in the moult of Spring,
He starts his sly loquacious quarreling,
His tantalising, and his sneers again;
When even Pheasants, scratching after grain,
Thick-necked and croupy, still keep cackling . . .

* * * *

When Saltburn Woods grow voluble and vain
And full of shapes and flitting sounds, and squabbling
Alien tongues, and artists practising . . .
When Saltburn Woods grow vocal to sustain
Last year's success without imperilling
The rapturous encores which they always gain;
Since, spite of North East blizzards, they obtain
The cream of Europe to come visiting
Their frigid halls, their favourless terrain . . .

* * * *

When birds like minstrels come adventuring
From Teneriffe, from Africa and Spain,
Adepts all, whose repertoires contain
Absurb felicities; some skilled in quavering

And overtones, while some appeal with plain
Old album songs; and others entertain
With choruses, whose frenzied rendering
Makes discord so divine, yet deafening,
That Redbreasts not unnaturally complain
That all this foreign and outlandish blathering
Has drowned their dimmer harmonies, and slain
The native English tunefulness they bring . . .

* * * *

Nevertheless they sing, and like a thing
Of utter holiness, their carolling
Seems from the tombs of saints to re-arise
And climb the dome above, outrivalling
The immemorial music of the skies.
Up and up it soars until it vies
With stars and cherubim; and, sharpening
As it soars, it doth etherealise,
Grows slim and slimmer to epitomize
The slenderness and lucency of Spring;
Up and up it soars, itself untwining,
Grows dim and dimmer till it liquefies
And melts most fluently and sighs
Itself through heaven's wall; and so subliming
Is eclipsed, and so enduring dies.

* * * *

Then, as by force of contrast, overhearing
That chant uplifted, it intensifies
Your coarseness, and seems to satirize
The animal that's in you, posturing
As man, it makes you pause and analyse
The merely physical, and half apologise

For your creator, and for the towering
Lusts inflammable that flame and fling
Gross shadows inwardly, darkening
Your desires, jigging, contorting
Gigantically as though to terrorise
Your will; and so their singing mortifies
Your bulk, and, so by sheer contrasting
With their too fragile song, you might surmise
Your own insuperable and suffocating
Earthiness, the abject shrunken size
Of your sad pea-nut soul, the niggling
Shrivelled grain of hope that underlies
The pomp of life and death, the unquestioning
Complacency that living on implies;
The self-sufficiency of enterprise,
The presumptuousness of dust, the footling
Sterility of action, of wrangling
For those cheap wrapped-up kickshaws that men prize.

For their reproachful voices seem to bring
No zest, no zeal, but just the saddening
And ungilded accusation which dries
Your courage up, that not your striving
Days on earth, nor yet your panic cries
In Hell, nor God, nor interceding
Creeds and collects, nor yet anything
By way of pardon that the heavens exercise,
Might touch or temper or spiritualise
The unmitigated clod that in you lies.

A dirge their song is now, a dirge which sighs
And drags right through your soul, splitting

It in shreds; a dirge, a downright humbling
Of the will; a mocking dirge belitting
The ape in you; a dirge which dignifies
Its setting in the woods, and glorifies
The imperishable frailty of Spring,
Yet turns to sarcasm the pennywise
Turnip-top and lumpish vegetating
Soft excrescency that you apprise
And estimate as man; a dirge reducing
All your pride to pulp, a dirge suggesting
Apathy, depression, corrupting
All to filth, to sluggishness, and so belies
All human worth and all aspiring.

A dirge so devilish, so full of biting
Revelation, it seems to tear disguise
And clothing from you, and leaves you revelling
In sewerage; for as those songs arise
So clogs your soul, until it crimps and dies,
Defeated by the flesh; until, surrendering,
The carrion have it, and its meanness lies,
All savour sped, floundering in the sties
And kennels of distrust, dead and wallowing.

V.

When Saltburn Woods awaken, and when men,
From Winter morbidness recovering,
Are much inclined to carnival, and when
The fieldfares bid good-bye, still chattering
And loathe to leave, why then we're welcoming
The first untrembling cadence of the Wren;
And then the Chiffchaff like a cricket cries;

Then Yellow Wagtails chase blue dragonflies
Around the pond with cheerful chirruping;
And Pipits then do pipe, and, piping, rise
And dance as on elastic, puppet-wise,
Like bits of burned-up paper fluttering
By fits and starts; then Yaffles advertise
Their iron beaks, and Tits soliliquise
Disjointedly; and then the Blackcap vies
With every throat that's there, bettering
Them all, and with his part-song silencing
The Fieldfares, putting their poor plain good-byes
Quite in the hush; and then the Goldfinch flies
A streak of light across the answering
Darkness of the pines; then even Magpies
Say their say, and Chaffinches are chuntering
Like idiots to themselves; then none denies
The Starling's genius in mimicking
Each and every one of them; and then the wise
Obese old Woodpigeons ventriloquise
Unseen and uninspired, yet their lullabies
Deceive the rest, their sleepy intoning
Sets every crested head a'wondering,
And looking for night's shadows in the skies.

When all this bliss, this intermingling
Of hymns and voices, seem to symbolise
The purity and opulence of Spring;
When every bird gives praise, and magnifies
God earnestly; when every psalm they sing
Seems an article of faith, an outpouring
Of universal prayer, an offering
So hallowed it serves to emphasize
Your private lewdness and iniquities . . .

Then in the wood, enchanted, and hearkening
To all that oratorio, listening
Yet languid, it sort of stupefies
Your mind until you lose the ordering
Of your thoughts, and feel your body anchoring
In carnal dirt; and feel the Self that lies
Like deadweight on your soul, feel it prise
Your passions open, feel it deadening
Your twice-dead faith, and so engendering
Doubt alone, distrust of God, and shambling
Disillusion; doubt that stultifies
The soul inherent in you, and defies
All the mælstrom and the triple scourging
Tortures of the Pit itself to exorcise
So trustless and intransitive a thing.

VI.

When Saltburn Woods awaken with the Spring,
And maddened birds first mate and sing amain,
More maddening and more joyously insane
With every mad magnificat they sing;
When most lunatically they entertain
And make hymns to their Maker; hymns that sting
And scald and harrow up your soul, and bring
The bygone back, bring thoughts that long had lain
Dead in the disused workings of the brain.
When long low verse and rising free refrain
Constitute a hymn more maddening
Every minute; when every note and strain
Is pure and quite distinct, like beaded rain
From crystal branches shaken, pattering
Upon the pebbled path; and Thrushes feign

To make a necklace out of theirs, and string
Them all like silver, and run them through a ring
Like silk; and link each note up in a chain
Of hymns unholy and of prayers profane,
So faithfully fallacious they constrain
The stars to come and shine by day and cling
Above the glade, enthralled and listening,
Undimmed and unocculted, and remain
And nevermore be blenched, nor ever wane.

Then on that day your lucky stars attain
Their apogee; then with their carolling
You're stark mad too; you take the cup and drain
Ichor and the strength of prophets, imagining
You're feasting on Olympus like a king;
You dare the Gods and live; your nerves distrain
The very sweetest sap that's in life's grain;
Composure's gone, and reason dwindling;
Rash passions rise and youthful zests again;
Moist on your lips the foamings of champagne
Deliciousness and spice in everything.

So, in the woods, and dumb with tight-shut eyes,
Like one who's under ether, slumbering
Yet half-aroused, you somehow feel arise
Opium and fumes, and heavy vapouring
Aromas that stealthily surprise
Your limbs, and hold your brain, and mesmerise
Your mind; you seem to inhale scents that bring
A drowsiness upon you and hypnotize
And drug your soul; you seem to feel the tingling
Of champagne moist on your lips, and gathering

In your nostrils, which willy-nilly tries
To bring before you and revitalise
Lost youthful raptures, that you'd thought to fling
Behind you into limbo; and overpowering
Thoughts are born within you; and cowering
Spirits sullenly materialise,
Whose lethargy and morose whispering
And inert accents seem to summarise
The sleep that men call life; and, murmuring
Their blasphemies, they seem to crystallise
And make more quick the hallucinations, lies
That made life possible, and did disguise
The imbecility, the perishing
Foolishness of all your wayfaring . . .

* * * *

And, last, you feel a stillness covering
The glade, as when a kestrel, hovering
Above his quarry, seems to paralyse
And kill all the love-talk and the tattling;
And, very still, you seem to realise
And learn that life's a farce; and pondering
The paltriness of things, the drivelling
Fatuity of eating, sleeping, giving
Birth to eaters, sleepers . . . you despise
The world and all, the woods and everything.

THE THAMES. TWO REACHES

I.

City

Consequent tugs with hoppers astern like toads trailing spawn;
Jibs and shears and the cancachinnating ministerial fuss of cranes,
And international crisis of wharves, with crates and their confident loads,
—Man busily humbugging all he's the one big stuff in brains.—

The embankment's nevrose emesis, a vomit of sheep at the sprint;
The natural grows to the nasty; the pigeons, like unmuscled clerks
Are aldermanic and slob: the gulls are dirty dead as lamb with mint;
Like weevils in biscuits the blackjacket folks take bad air in the parks.

The bridges are crowded; they're slung like hammocks in foc'sle phugs,
Like culverted sewers over the river's gully-trap sludge,
Precluding the blue from ripplings already as foul as bugs;
The pavement has plane-trees like the popshop skirt of a night-walking drudge.

II.

Richmond

Here is happy unjournalised phlegm, and unadvertised things;
There's felt for man's fetters, and gentling of goads in the forth-rightness of trees;

The chestnut's sugar-iced flowers strew confetti and paperings;
And declining light slants on cedars the decanted wine-purples of leas.

Rhododendrons are candied captured heat of a torrid noon;
There's the far blue of hills, and spillings of woad in wild hyacinth's swathes;
The young year is lodged in the beech where the woodpecker hones his harpoon;
The heron's an exquisite delft in the pool where the dipper bathes.

There are green perusing becalments where blood may balance and bail;
And the dial be spun from full to a docking headway drone;
The air is engine-room moist and as thick as a river rat's tail;
The singing birds are apostles, and "go slow" is the tidings they own.

III.

City and Richmond

They are one in the truth they pilot, one in their fact to the bar;
That the best-paying muck on the planet's the human brute.
As he planks his cement where he pleases, so he leaves a pasture at par—
Some reminder green in the sun of Calamity's end to the shoot.—

Yours at behest Earth's jubilative seas,
Yours by fo'csle treaty all her fees.
Your swaddling was her milky lingeries,
Your pap her Eve-blue breasts, and lenient ease;
And yours her surf's exultant lutanies,
Her jolly runings and her threnodies,
Her tempests shingling shap along the screes,
Her streaks like Adam's ribs, her cat's-paws in the breeze.

For you her waves stampede like pampas colts,
Trammelling the stallion turbine's million volts,
To gurgled iridescence, then below
The primal polyps breed upon its bolts.

Tossing their gristly sport from race to race,
Tearing down traffickers from pride of place,
Yelling with glee, and rife with wreck, they pace,
Till man and merchantman like bolts from space
Tumble in scrap-iron from the ocean's face.

For you her Oceans snort like steppe steers;
For you the sleek Atlanticker careers
To vortex and vehemence, to oily leers
And scumming colours, and a trace of tears,
On the bland drapery of their wet biers.

For you her Ice-floes grunch their tender spoil,
Slitting proof-plate like Dewsbury shoddy noil,
Splinting from bilge to foretruck like tin foil;
Rooting Titanics up with bison toil,

Making plump thighs with Dago stew to boil,—
Though, two miles deep, they neither shun the soil,—
Such limbs-de-luxe with ulcerous Thirds to coil!
For you their Fate was tossed in such turmoil.

For you the lithe seal-filchers, boorga-packed,
Icicled Spitzbergen white, are lurched, outracked
Forenenst a blizzard, gored, rent and sacked;
Well, policies are paid and cheques all backed,
And that's their end in peace and sleep's compact.

Yours at behest Earth's jubilative seas,
Her jolly runnings and her threnodies,
And Drowned of all Races in their just degrees.

GULLS

Prone on the close-turfed brow of this sheer steep
Dizzily I peer and crane its fringed verge;
Deep down, deep down the hungry breakers leap,
Hungry upon the shore in ceaseless surge;
So stark the height they seem but clotted foam,
Foam-clots upchurning on the green-weed rocks,
The shore itself a pencilled line of lane
Where tameless waters roam.
Merrily funereal the misty ocean mocks,
And mocking, turns a farce from endless pain.

Worlds, worlds away, where sea meets sky,
Comes stumbling o'er the dreamed horizon's bound
A tipsy coal-black tramper floundering by,
Toeing the trading-routes on its tedious round.
Inshore, and knocking at the scarpment's base,
Five futile cobbles curtsey in their track,
Bobbing and tossing like lumber logs confined
Where shallow rapids race.
Then listlessly the fancy hearkens back
To sea-gulls revelling down the raping wind.

Swiftly in grace they go before the breeze;
Carving ellipses, circling fairy rings,
Then pushing down to nose-dive to the seas,
Then stalling low with hovered frettered wings:
Upswerving now, up past the headland's face,
Up like meteors through the burning air,
Clean to the clouds, and there like planets float
Poised endlessly in space;
Last like white petals sink to a jutting spur,
Shrieking their triumph on one strident note,

MOONLIGHT

The bay, motionless, calm as snow-bound peaks
Lifting white crests, pure unattainable
From solitudinous Eastern sands.
The sea is magical with neither form nor substance,
An essence ethereal, melting and variant,
A celestial lake, liquified light,
A soul, bodyless,
A spirit elemental, intangible, incomprehensible,
Steeped and bathed in white flame-fire of the moon.

A myriad million atoms flecked in fire,
Constellation seething, a glittering miracle.

Black hulks of fisher-cobbles have yellow lights
That catch in the molten sea a thousand shimmerings,
Concertina-like refractions, and grotesque shapings.

The beam from one strong star in the wavelets
Threads a silver-golden chain of flowers
In scintillating unfixable movement.

Stars stand for Ideals; in the smooth empyrean they
Stand for transcendentals; they typify the height
And heartbeat of endeavour; incarnate in their light
Man sees the Great Objective, and the meaning and the might
Of tasks and consummations; for each emphatic ray
Is revelation, is his very soul in action, magnified and bright
As through supernal lenses; the stars that shine by night
Light up vistas, prospects; they strengthen and they sink away
In intermitted poignancy as though they'd fain essay
To symbolize the crowding on of canvas, the perturbing flight
Of Time, the need for exploration, forthfaring, and foray.
They stand for searches baffled; like artists they portray
The brunt, the gist, the immanence of life; the message they convey
And the text of it is battle and sublime unrest, the pressing-on, the fight,
Emergencies and turbulence, the yearnings that each day
Probe the fogs about us, permit man to survey
His spirit silhouetted in transit 'gainst the grey
And blotchy infamy, the earthiness, the uncongenial blight
That rusts him all his glamours, blots the goal from sight.

With tame wits and uncritical we work those wits away,
Our palms all gritty pricklings, our noses to the fray,
Through what we call our manhood, till what we call decay
Seizes up our motors, rusts cylinders once bright
With units of high-tension, with ampères of delight.

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